

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) An autofocus apparatus, comprising:

an image pickup means for converting [[the]] light of an object received through a focus lens system to electric signals and outputting the signals as image data;

an A/D converting means for A/D-converting the image data to obtain digital image data;

an AF evaluating means for outputting an AF evaluated value obtained by integrating high-frequency components of brightness data in the digital image data;

a sampling means for sampling the AF evaluated value obtained by said AF evaluating means while moving [[the]] a position of said focus lens system;

a flash means for illuminating light; and

a focus driving means for determining a focus according to a result of the sampling of [[an]] the AF evaluated value by said sampling means and driving said focus lens system to the focus position[[:]],

wherein the illuminating light is flashed in synchronism with [[the]] a sampling timing of [[an]] the AF evaluated value.

2. (Currently Amended) The autofocus apparatus according to Claim 1[[:]], wherein the range where [[an]] the AF evaluated value is sampled is set to a range where the light of the flash can reach.

3. (Currently Amended) The autofocus apparatus according to Claim 1[[:]], wherein the light of the flash is used to obtain the AF evaluated value as well as for reducing red-eye effect.

4. (Currently Amended) The autofocus apparatus according to Claim 1[[]], further comprising:

an AE evaluating means for calculating an AE evaluated value corresponding to the brightness data in the digital image data[[]],

wherein a quantity of the light of flash is determined in synchronism with the sampling timing of the AF evaluated value according to the AE evaluated value acquired at the time of [[a]] the flash.

5. (Currently Amended) The autofocus apparatus according to Claim 1[[]], wherein it is determined whether or not a flash having a required light quantity can be performed for [[the]] a number of sampling times of [[an]] the AF evaluated value, and when it is determined that the flash can not be performed then the light quantity of the flash is reduced or the number of sampling times of [[an]] the AF evaluated value is reduced.

6. (Currently Amended) The autofocus apparatus according to Claim 1[[]], further comprising:

an AE evaluating means for calculating an AE evaluated value corresponding to the brightness data for the digital image data[[]],

wherein [[an]] the AE evaluated value acquired when the flash is performed is compared to [[an]] the AE evaluated value acquired without the flash, and when both of the values are not different, [[a]] the flash is not performed when sampling [[an]] the AF evaluated value.

7. (Currently Amended) An autofocus apparatus, comprising:

an image pickup device which converts ~~[[the]]~~ light of an object received through a focus lens system to electric signals and outputting the signals as image data;

an A/D converter which A/D-converts the image data to obtain digital image data;

an AF evaluating unit which outputs an AF evaluated value obtained by integrating high-frequency components of brightness data in the digital image data;

a sampling unit which samples the AF evaluated value obtained by said AF evaluating unit while moving ~~[[the]]~~ a position of said focus lens system;

a flash which illuminates light; and

a focus driver which determines a focus according to a result of the sampling of ~~[[an]]~~ the AF evaluated value by said sampling unit and driving said focus lens system to the focus position~~[[;]]~~,

wherein the illuminating light is flashed in synchronism with ~~[[the]]~~ a sampling timing of ~~[[an]]~~ the AF evaluated value.

8. (Currently Amended) The autofocus apparatus according to Claim 7~~[[;]]~~, wherein ~~[[the]]~~ a range where ~~[[an]]~~ the AF evaluated value is sampled is set to a range where the light of the flash can reach.

9. (Currently Amended) The autofocus apparatus according to Claim 7~~[[;]]~~, wherein the light of the flash is used to obtain the AF evaluated value as well as for reducing red-eye effect.

10. (Currently Amended) The autofocus apparatus according to Claim 7~~[[;]]~~, further comprising:

an AE evaluating unit which calculates an AE evaluated value corresponding to the brightness data in the digital image data[[:]],

wherein a quantity of the light of flash is determined in synchronism with the sampling timing of the AF evaluated value according to the AE evaluated value acquired at the time of [[a]] the flash.

11. (Currently Amended) The autofocus apparatus according to Claim 7[[:]], wherein it is determined whether or not a flash having a required light quantity can be performed for [[the]] a number of sampling times of [[an]] the AF evaluated value, and when it is determined that the flash can not be performed then the light quantity of the flash is reduced or the number of sampling times of [[an]] the AF evaluated value is reduced.

12. (Currently Amended) The autofocus apparatus according to Claim 7[[:]], further comprising:

an AE evaluating unit which calculates an AE evaluated value corresponding to the brightness data for the digital image data[[:]],

wherein [[an]] the AE evaluated value acquired when the flash is performed is compared to [[an]] the AE evaluated value acquired without the flash, and when both of the values are not different, [[a]] the flash is not performed when sampling [[an]] the AF evaluated value.